

# The IDOL of Acceptance



■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LCPC, LMHC

How much of your life has been spent trying to “fit in” and be accepted? This desire for acceptance is the driving force behind so many decisions we make, especially in our youth, affecting choices from wardrobe apparel to who we spend time with. It’s a common misconception that being accepted will lead to genuine happiness and will reveal someone’s personal worth to anyone looking. The truth, however, can be hard to believe, as Scripture shares that we already encompass complete worth in God and don’t need someone’s acceptance to “unlock it”. I’m sure this situation sounds familiar to many of you. When you think about your desire for acceptance, consider how it motivates your behavior, creates inauthenticity in your life, and impacts your relationship with God.

## What is My Motivation?

One of my favorite questions to think about is “Why do I do what I do?” This question speaks to the heart of what motivates us. Put another way, what do we allow to propel our decision-making? For Christians, this question becomes so important as we need to clearly recognize what we are allowing to impact us and shape our future. Ideally, we would come to find that our motivations are pure and godly; however, that isn’t always the case.

Do I do what I do because it makes me happy? Do I want others to see me in a good light? Maybe I do what I do out of concern for others and their well-being? These motivators aren’t “bad” on the surface; however, if they don’t line up with biblical standards, then they should be abandoned. The answer to “Why do I do what I do?” should be “Everything I do is for God.” Everything we do should point back to Him. We should be motivated by God, seeking to do what pleases Him and acknowledging His plan for our lives.

## What Affects My Authentic Living?

When we are motivated solely by our needs (acceptance, fulfillment, love), we may be prone to hide parts of our true self in order to get what we want. We may tuck away our past traumas, our odd quirks, and our readily apparent imperfections, all in the hope of

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being accepted by peers/colleagues/family members. While doing so may seem like the right option, it undoubtedly leads to inauthenticity as no one is seeing the “real you”.

As noted earlier, we can fool ourselves into thinking that we have to earn our worth and that one way to do so is by being accepted in today’s world. This couldn’t be further from the truth, as God, who created us, made us fully worthy. Rather than hiding our shortcomings, with Jesus we can be authentic, coming just as we are and being fully accepted. We can be authentic with our Lord: He knows us inside and out and wants to be with us as we are.

## How is My Relationship with God Impacted?

As noted in the previous sections, identifying what motivates us has everything to do with our relationship to God. Upon entering heaven, God is not only going to look at all that we did, but He is also going to consider why we did what we did. He is going to look into our hearts. I picture our offerings to the Lord being tested by fire: Anything done for ourselves (even good things) will turn to ash, but what was truly done for the Lord will be refined and reap a reward.

As you think about this topic, consider the following:

- Do you prioritize being accepted above all else, and it has become an idol in your life?
- What motivates you?
- When you do something good, does that automatically mean that you have pure, godly motives?
- How could you be more authentic in life?
- How has your relationship with God been impacted by these things?

In addition to being motivated by godly desires, we need to learn how to find our acceptance, love, and fulfillment elsewhere. Namely, in God. When you feel the desire to reach out your hands to receive earthly acceptance, stay put. When you feel the pull to be anything but your authentic self, remain where you are. God is more than capable and willing to meet you where you are at (in all your shortcomings), and with this relationship comes genuine acceptance, love, and fulfillment like no other. ■



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